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## A bit of comfort

MICHELLE ALLENBERG/POSTMEDIA NETWORK

Mary Ens of Fonthill uses his tools at his workshop in Fenwick to create a pen. Ens has been making pens for a fundraiser for the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Foundation from the wood of the more than 500-year-old Comfort Maple located in Pelham.



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# LOCAL NEWS

## Keeping a piece of the Comfort Maple

**MICHELLE ALLENBERG**  
Postmedia Network

A thin layer of dust covers piles of wood and a collection of tools inside Mary Ens' workshop in Fenwick.

At 70 years old, Ens is lively and passionate as he talks about the more than 500-year-old Comfort Maple that grows in Pelham. The Comfort Maple is one of the oldest sugar maples in Canada and is famous for receiving a natural heritage designation in June 2000. It is one of only two trees in Niagara recognized for its historical significance.

Ens said most Sugar Maples live between 100 to 180 years, so the Comfort Maple is rather important from that standpoint.

Ens passion for woodwork and woodturning, which began when he was in high school, led him to the discarded wood from the Comfort Maple. He approached the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority about the

maple's trimmings and was pleased to find out Mich Germann, the NPCA's superintendent, had kept the wood.

"He'd been collecting it for years and he has been working on it for 10 or 15 years, everything that has been out has been saved," Ens said.

Ens first project with the wood was creating a pen. He showed the pen to his friend Germann who suggested he show it to the NPCA. Ens said right away the board wanted pens for their board members and it slowly evolved from there.

Ens has created unique pens for the Foundation that are now sold as part of fundraising efforts for the foundation in support of a number of NPCA causes, including the protection and recovery of species at risk.

Ens said he was surprised to learn that people from across the country and around the world were joining in the making of a small piece of the tree.



MICHELLE ALLENBERG/POSTMEDIA NETWORK

Mary Ens of Fonthill holds a pen he made at his workshop in Fenwick. Ens has been making pens for a fundraiser for the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Foundation from the wood of the more than 500-year-old Comfort Maple located in Pelham.

Ens enjoys the grand beauty of the tree and said it is particularly wonderful in the summer. For Ens, the continued protec-

tion of the tree is needed, so assisting the NPCA's fundraising efforts that will help care for the Comfort Maple has

been important.

Ens knows nothing lasts forever, he said even a tree as grand and old as the Comfort

Maple will have to come to an end one day. But for now he is enjoying the tree and hoping to give a piece of that enjoyment and history to others.

"It should live for quite some time yet. Though the arborist Mich said it is on its last sort of phase, it's not going to live forever, nothing does. I don't doubt that it will still be here in 40 or 50 years, but everything has its time," Ens said.

The tree was named after the Comfort family who once owned the property where the tree is located. The land was sold in 1816 and the tree was later entrusted to the NPCA for protection. The tree is 24.4 metres at its crown and a trunk circumference of 6 metres.

The pens will be sold for \$75 each and will come with a letter of authenticity. Pens will be available for purchase beginning Jan. 16 by calling 905-788-3135 ext. 260 or by emailing foundation@NPCA.ca.

MAllenberg@Postmedia.com

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**LAURA BARTON**  
Postmedia Network  
Fatima Ibrahim and her

family have experienced a lot of firsts since coming to Canada as refugees in March last year.

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Seeing snow for the first time was a notable mention. She said her three-year-old son Youssif Friegoun's eyes went wide when he first saw the flakes.

"Canada is different weather than Africa," she said of her original home in Sudan. "The first time we saw the snow — wow!"

Another first for Youssif is a brother, who happens to be Welland's first baby of 2017, born at Niagara Health System's maternity ward at St. Catharines Hospital.

Abdulrahman Friegoun,

named after Ibrahim's late father, was welcomed to this family and the world at 9:30 a.m. on Jan. 1. He weighed in at seven pounds and 11.3 ounces.

While mom was recovering in bed, Youssif was more than a little upset, shedding tears and not wanting to be in the room. Dad Mohamed Friegoun stepped out to comfort his oldest son.

"He's very angry," Ibrahim said.

**Continued on Page 6**

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# Always room for people in need

ALLAN BENNER  
POSTMEDIA NETWORK

Local homeless shelters are filled to capacity as the coldest days of winter arrive.

Four families and three individuals are now staying in emergency accommodations rented by Hope Centre, while up to 20 people are participating in the agency's transitional housing program, and five more are in its Housing First program which provides subsidized long-term apartments.

"We're well over 30 people that we're keeping out of the cold right now," said Hope Centre executive director Mark Carl.

But there's always room for more. "At this time of the year we will always make room for someone. We'll always make sure there's a bed and we don't

leave them outside," he said. But freeing up space for new clients within Hope Centre's emergency housing programs is becoming increasingly challenging.

Although the agency's transitional housing program provides from one to 11 months accommodations, giving people an opportunity to save enough money for a first and last month rent to move into an apartment of their own, saving up that money is becoming difficult for Hope Centre clients as rental fees increase along with property values in the Welland area.

"We're finding a lot of individuals, if you're on social assistance, the rents are becoming very hard to afford right now," Carl said. "It's harder for people to move out of the shelters and into an apartment."

Carl estimated that apart-



FRANK BENJAMIN/POSTMEDIA NETWORK

Hope Centre executive director Mark Carl says increasing rental fees are making it difficult for the organization's clients to get back on their feet.

ment rental fees in Welland are about \$800 to \$1,400 a month — far more than the \$647 a month a single

male receives in assistance payments.

Hope Centre has been able to work around that problem by renting apartments on behalf of clients and placing two or three people together to bring down the cost each roommate is required to pay.

"That way, under supervision, they can pay \$375 or \$600 a month. That way they can afford to have an apartment that's safe," he said.

Carl is not aware of anyone currently without accommodations in the city, although there are still a few individuals spending their day on the city streets.

He said Hope Centre keeps in close contact with people who may be in need, to ensure they have a warm place to spend winter nights.

"Some people just like to be outside, but we always stop by and talk to them and make

sure they have everything they need," he said. "We've given them winter coats and stuff like that."

Carl asked people to call Hope Centre at 905-788-0744 ext. 250 to report anyone in need of emergency accommodations.

While working to ensure that everyone has a place to stay, Hope Centre and other local social services agencies are also continuing to ensure no one goes hungry. But that, too, posed a challenge during an extremely busy holiday season.

"Our numbers were up about five per cent," Carl said, referring to the number of people relying on the agency's food bank in December.

The community, however, did step up to meet the demand.

"People are very generous," Carl said. "People give

a lot during the Christmas season and that holds us over through the winter."

Open Arms Mission has been overwhelmed with generosity during the holidays, too, said Melissa Kirkpatrick.

"This was the busiest December in terms of food drop-offs and donations."

Although it was relatively quiet during the fall, when December arrived "it was like, wow!" said Kirkpatrick, who took over as Open Arms' chief executive officer on Jan. 1, replacing the semi-retired Jerry Vanderklok.

"It was amazing," she added. "People are so good here in Welland. They are really generous. The reason we can give so much is because people are giving to us."

ABenner@postmedia.com  
Twitter: @cabenner1

## Efforts begin to bring fighter home

DIANA MEHTA  
THE CANADIAN PRESS

Negotiations are underway to recover the body of a former Niagara Falls man killed while fighting Islamic State militants in Syria, a leader of Toronto's Kurdish community said last Thursday.

Nazzareno Tassone, 24, was killed in the city of Raqqa on Dec. 21 while fighting alongside Kurdish forces, according to the Kurdish People's Defense Units, a U.S.-backed group also known as the YPG.

His family only learned of his death this week when a letter from the YPG was delivered to their Niagara Falls home by police and mem-

bers of the Toronto Kurdish Community Centre.

In that letter, the family also learned that Tassone's body had been seized by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, known as ISIS or ISIL.

Tassone's sister, Giustina Tassone, pleaded with the Canadian government last Wednesday to help repatriate her brother's body so the family could have a funeral.

The Toronto Kurdish Community Centre said last Thursday that negotiations had begun between the YPG and ISIL to retrieve the Canadian fighter's body.

"We spoke to (the YPG) this morning and there's still ongoing negotiations between them," said centre co-president Ilhan Kaya.

Kaya said the YPG was also negotiating to recover the bodies of other fighters killed in combat on the same day as Nazzareno Tassone, including a British volunteer fighter named Ryan Lock.

"It's not going to be a short process or an easy process," he said.

All costs related to retrieving and repatriating Tassone's body will be covered by the YPG, Kaya said, and the cost of the man's eventual funeral in Canada will be covered by the Toronto Kurdish Community Centre.

"We're talking about a person that's not even Kurdish that left his home country to fight against ISIS for the Kurds and for the name of humanity, so we wanted to show

respect," Kaya said. "We are just grateful for him." Tassone left Canada in June, telling his family he was headed to Iraq and Turkey to teach English, his sister has said. But given his long-standing interest in the military, she said the family suspected he might have tried to get involved in the Middle Eastern conflict.

The letter they received last Tuesday confirmed their suspicion.

Kaya said the YPG notified the Kurdish community centre in Toronto of Tassone's death on Dec. 23, but it took time to track down his family and deliver the news in person.

The centre plans to remain in touch with the family as they wait for the man's body



THE CANADIAN PRESS

Nazzareno Tassone, who lived for several years in Niagara Falls, is shown in this undated image from a Facebook memorial page. A Kurdish group says the Canadian man fighting Islamic State militants in Syria has been killed.

to be brought home, Kaya said.

"Our community is big, over 5,000 people, and everyone is supporting them," he said.

It's not the first time the Toronto Kurdish Community Centre has been contacted by the YPG about the death of a Canadian fighter, Kaya said.

The group played a similar supporting role when another Canadian, John Robert Gallagher, was killed in Syria while fighting ISIL with the YPG in late 2015.

A key difference in that case, however, was that Gallagher's body was already in the hands of the YPG, Kaya said.

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## Improvements for 2017 infrastructure

During our last meeting in December, council approved the town's 2017 Capital Budget. The nearly \$11 million budget includes many continued improvements to town infrastructure.

**Summersides Boulevard:** Council re-approved the construction of a new street linking downtown Fonthill (by extending Pelham Town Square) with Wellington Way and Rice Road. The street will include a centre boulevard, trees, and wide multipurpose sidewalks/trails on both sides. Council will name it after Jim Summersides, a Second World War veteran of the elite, joint Canadian-American "First Special Service Force," a dedicated member of the Royal Canadian Legion (Fonthill Branch 613), and a volunteer public speaker to school children about the travesties of war.

While much of the eastern section was constructed as a base road last year, we have to complete the planning approvals to finalize the last, western leg (closest to Station Street).

Council is committed to constructing this road to help better link downtown Fonthill to other, newer developments. The road will also help open up opportunities for further residential and mixed-use development.

**Station Street:** As the town continues to grow, Station Street between Regional Road 20 and Port Robinson is becoming a more important transportation link. At the same time, improving the storm sewers on Station (which are currently open ditches) will help with storm water issues in areas above Station Street. Finally, the aged watermain needs upgrading. Each year we continue to

remove and upgrade the old cast iron pipes that are susceptible to leaks and cracks. Because of these challenges, the town applied for funding from the Provincial Government to improve Station Street. We look forward to hearing funding news in early-2017.

**Haiat Street:** While we have reconstructed most of Haiat Street over the years, we are now to concentrate on the southern section. Council approved funds to start reconstructing Haiat from Welland Road to Beckett and include a bit of Welland Road (from Haiat to Edward).

While the road condition does need improving, the real impetus for the works is to replace the old cast-iron watermain.

**Roland Road:** The town finally improved a deteriorated section of Roland Road (east of Sulphur Springs) last year. Now we

included funds to rehabilitate Roland from the parking entrance for Shorthills Provincial Park eastward.

**Maple Street:** Another year, another "bridge." This one on Maple Street just south of Sixteen Road, will be replaced with dual culverts in 2017.

**Sidewalks and road base repairs:** The town made several and much needed repairs to existing sidewalks and road sections last year. Council approved increased funds, more than \$275,000, in 2017 to address and repair additional areas.

I will write more about our other planned capital improvements for 2017 next column.

You may contact Mayor Dave at [mayor.dave@pelham.ca](mailto:mayor.dave@pelham.ca) or read past columns at [www.pelhammayordave.blogspot.com](http://www.pelhammayordave.blogspot.com).

## Fancy farm girl is making great wine

The backbone of any great wine comes from a few sources of inspiration and hard work, namely the winemaker, along with a vineyard manager or grower.

Sometimes these can be the same person, but throughout Niagara we have some incredible talent in making Niagara wines world-class.

I wanted to talk to someone about being a winemaker here in our region and figured, since her family has been farming here for more than 200 years, who better than Sue-Ann Staff of Sue-Ann Staff Estate Winery near Jordan.

I went to visit Staff at her farmhouse on a cold, clear day last week, where it doubles as a tasting room, retail area and showcase for the immense amount of awards her wines have garnered. Upon my arrival I was warmly greeted by an immensely happy, cheerful and huge Bernese mountain dog named, of course, Brix. This was really a great foreshadowing into what Staff and her philosophy entails, as the atmosphere shadowed the furry joy that greeted me at the door.

Staff has been winemaking in our region, as well as consulting, for years and she recently took a keen focus on her own brand as she is now dedicated to growing her own business on the farm. Her family actually



ORANGE JOURNAL/SPECIAL TO THE POSTMEDIA NETWORK  
Sue-Ann Staff, owner of Sue-Ann Staff Estate Winery, now home to Fancy Farm Girl wines.

boasts two Grape Kings, awarded each year from Grape Growers of Ontario, with her father and grandfather taking the honour, and five generations have tended the acre-

age leading to its wine fame today.

As I sit in her sun-drenched dining room, sipping some caffeine, talking about the wine industry, I am struck by her genuine enthusiasm and passion for the industry and winemaking.

Today there are challenges at all angles, from LCBO to changing demographics, but Staff takes it all in stride as part of the business. We tend to see jobs such as winemaking, and being a chef, as cool and exciting, and they certainly can be at times. The harsh reality is the work can be back-breaking, with incredible long hours, and not really much left at the end to show for it.

Staff's winery currently sits in the farm's garage where she has used her skills at Tetris to fit in fermentation tanks, barrels and bottles all amazingly in the same room, along with space to cater weddings.

It has been 20 years since Staff graduated from her winemaking program in Australia (I will forgive her for not coming to Niagara College as we hadn't started yet) and her fierce pride of place has kept her here in Niagara building our industry each and every day, which has included stints of teaching our students at the college.

As we sit and go through her wines in a tasting, her voice begins to race and her adrenaline clearly rises as immense pride

shows on her sleeve and in the bottle. There is a great range of easy-drinking wines to more austere and focused gems such as her Roberts Block Riesling or Cabernet Franc.

The recent success of her second-tier wines named Fancy Farm Girl wines in not only Ontario but other provinces is a testament to Staff's personality and love of wine.

The goal of these wines is not just to build her brand and sales, but also to provide some fun and love into wine drinkers' choices, and to not take ourselves, or winemaking, too seriously.

Her plans are to grow the winery on the farm and design a place that not only is practical for the business, but also a place people want to come and enjoy wine as much as she does. And that is a high bar indeed.

—Craig has been in the food and beverage industry for three decades as a chef, restaurateur, professor, international competitor and now dean of the Canadian Food and Wine Institute at Niagara College. His passion for all things food and wine has led him to Niagara to lead the institute to become the world's foremost educator in fermentation sciences and culinary arts.

# LOCAL NEWS

## Hope Centre men to get spa day



LAURA BARTON/POSTMEDIA NETWORK

Karie Constantino, owner of Palazzo Salon and Spa in Welland, gets ready to hand over a cheque donation to Mark Carl (right), executive director of The Hope Centre. She and her staff, including salon co-ordinator Jason Alexander, left, raised money for the centre over the past few weeks.

**LAURA BARTON**  
Postmedia Network

A donation from Palazzo Salon and Spa given to Welland's Hope Centre is the prelude to a day of pampering for some of the organization's male clients.

Salon owner Karie Constantino said raising money is something her business does every year around this time. Her business has been open for 11 years and every year she's asked her staff and clients to donate to the charity of choice for that year around Christmas. She matches donations raised by her staff.

This year they raised \$1,610 for The Hope Centre.

"We feel it's important to help support and give back," Constantino said. "The community supports us so we like to give back to different organizations."

Mark Carl, executive director for The Hope Centre, said he was thrilled to receive the donation and it will help families and individuals who use Hope Centre programs.

"Right now we have families that are staying in our emergency shelter, so it will help buy presents for them, gifts for the family. Keep them

housed over the holidays," he said. Donations also go towards food, the counselling services and other programs the centre offers.

This is the first time that Constantino has picked The Hope Centre for her fundraising efforts, but the two are teaming up again in January to treat a few of the centre's clients.

Constantino came up with the idea of donating a wash, cut and hairstyling to five individuals who use The Hope Centre. She asked Carl to pick five people who had been making a strong effort to turn their lives around. Carl picked five men.

"These men are individuals staying in our housing programs," he said. "We're going to reward them with a day at the spa because men don't ever get that opportunity."

Carl said they're feeling a little awkward about it right now because they don't think they fit in with a salon and spa atmosphere, but Constantino said her staff will do their best to make them feel comfortable.

After a spa day, the men will have a chance to have a meal at My Alibi Bistro, which is right next door.

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# Family excited for life in Canada with new addition

## FROM PAGE 2

Her friend Reshaa Mohammed, who helped translate for Ibrahim, said, "He's very close to his mom. When she goes to her friends and she holds their babies, he's always crying. So it's going to be a challenge

for her. For him, too."

Ibrahim said she plans to turn to her support system of friends to help her with her new baby. It's going to be different having a baby in a new country away from her other friends and her mom and siblings, although

Mohammed said she will be there to help Ibrahim along the way.

She came to Canada in 2008, and was Ibrahim's first friend here.

With Mohammed's translating, Ibrahim said, "I'm excited to raise him here. It's going to be better for

him to be raised in Canada."

She's excited to get him home too, where she's more comfortable and can work on the family dynamic.

Yousif is angry with her now, but she hopes to learn how to help the brothers get along. She plans to spend lots of time with both children so they don't feel left out.

"My son was the only baby for three years," Ibrahim said without translation.

Yousif did show some interest in his baby brother when the family gathered together for a picture. While held up in his dad's arms, he stared down for the first time at little Abdulrahman nestled quietly in mom's arms.

Ibrahim smiled as she said her newborn was going to be a "famous man now" because he's the first baby of the year.

He's in good company.

Sarah Shang is the first Niagara Falls baby of 2017, arriving at 6:59 a.m. to parents Chun and Guanchao Shang.

And Sarah wasn't just the first Niagara Falls baby, she was first for the entire region, weighing in at seven pounds, 1.9 ounces.

Sandy Baker, a 25-year charge nurse said last Sunday was "a slow day." She said the hospital averages about eight births per day.

Most years, the new year baby is delivered well before sunrise.

In this case, a mere minute was the difference — a baby was born at 11:59 p.m. Dec. 31.

— with files from John Law

barton@postmedia.com

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  - Public Service Requests (PSRs)
  - More to come!

DOWNLOAD TODAY at the App Store or Google Play

## NO PARKING

WINTER PARKING REGULATIONS IN EFFECT

No parking allowed on ANY Town streets at ANY TIME so as to interfere with the clearing of snow or the application of sand or salt to the roadways.

During weather events, when sanders, salters or plows are in operation, PARKING IS NOT allowed on any of the Town streets.

### Drop-In Zumba Class @ Arena

Tues, Jan 17  
9:30-10:30am &  
7:00-8:00pm (No class this week)

Wed, Jan 18  
7:30 - 8:30pm (No class this week)  
Thurs, Jan 19  
10am - 11am

### WANTED: Certified Zumba Instructor

Call Julie Cook at 905-892-2607 ext. 329 for details

## JOIN OUR TEAM

The Town of Pelham is now accepting applications for the position:

- Casual Crossing Guard
  - 2017 Spring/Summer Student Opportunities
- Apply at [www.pelham.ca/career-opportunities](http://www.pelham.ca/career-opportunities)



CALL FOR MEMBERS

The Town of Pelham is seeking interested individuals to join the:  
• Pelham Summerfest Committee



Visit [pelham.ca/volunteer](http://pelham.ca/volunteer) to apply by Wednesday, January 25, 2017 at noon.

For more info, contact the Town Clerk at [njbazzato@pelham.ca](mailto:njbazzato@pelham.ca) or (905) 892-2607 ext. 318.



## Offers Monkeynastics Classes!

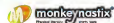
From January 11, 2017 - April 5, 2017

Old Pelham Town Hall  
(191 Canboro Road)

Wednesday Evenings  
2-3 yrs 5:00-5:45 pm  
4-6 yrs 5:45-6:30 pm  
6-8 yrs 6:30-7:15 pm  
(No class Wednesday March 1, 2017)

Ages 2-8

Pricing (per child): \$132.00 for 12 weeks



REGISTER AT [PELHAM.CA/REGISTER](http://PELHAM.CA/REGISTER)

## Quilting Lessons For Beginners

Interested in learning how to quilt? Now's your chance  
Join the Town of Pelham's N.W. Adult Quilting Lesson program TODAY!

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Brodies Drug Store	Mommax Boyz Pub & Eatery	Reif Estate Winery
Fort Erie Driving School (Gord's)	Teal Cosmetics Laser & Aesthetics	Royal Niagara Golf Club
Apex Driving Academy	Healthwise Seaway Mall	Seaway Mall
Americana Waves Waterpark	Irish Harp Pub	Strada West Eat and Sip House
Applebee's Niagara	Johnny Roccas Italian Grill	The Works - Gourmet Bistro Burger
Beacon Harbourside Restaurant	Zap Zone	Broadway Upholstery Restaurant



.....and many more!

AVAILABLE ONLINE ONLY

# THIS FRIDAY JANUARY 13TH

[PelhamNews.ca/FrugalFridays](http://PelhamNews.ca/FrugalFridays)





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- **FREE** package of batteries
- **FREE** hearing aid performance & settings check
- **FREE** counselling



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Career Training

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<b>ST. CATHARINES</b> Lifetime Learning Centre, 535 Lake St. or call: 905-646-3737	Wed., Jan. 18 & 25, Wed. Feb. 1 1:00p.m., Room 226

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